

What the World Owes to Alexander Mack

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IN CONTEMPLATING the above subject, it is realized that there may be a tendency to read into the works of a writer things not originally intended. There is no thought in this short article of entering into any theological discussion or criticism. I doubt very much if Alexander Mack had any intention of giving what might be styled a "new theology," but rather desired a return to the old paths as indicated by the Book of Books. When we contemplate the early years of the infant church we may forget the fact that when Alexander Mack led the group that early morning in 1708 to the river's brink for New Testament baptism, that he was a young man of 29 years. Six years later he published in Schwarzenau Germany the answers to Gruber's 39 questions. A perusal of these in the light of some of the recent discussions among our Brethren will indicate that the writer must have been led by the Holy Spirit in his answers thus recorded. Alexander Mack did not set eyes upon the work in America until 1729 when he had reached 50 years of age, and then it was only his privilege to be with it some six years until his hands were folded in peace across his breast. However, not until he had given to America and the world a church, or a people who have stood through more than two hundred years for that which is solid and substantial in the best citizenship of any country. Alexander Mack has given the world a people who realized the evils of war, and therefore declared for peace. He gave to the world a people who realized that no man should own another and deprive him of the right of freedom, and therefore set before the country long before the Civil War the right of freedom for the oppressed black race. Through him and his early followers we have given to all, the fact that intemperance in alcohol is disastrous to all concerned. Thus some of the things that we as a nation finally reached and agreed upon were first launched in the councils of the Brethren groups. Long before Robert Raikes gave instruction to the street waifs of London, England, the followers of Alexander Mack—not the followers, but those who were followers of the Christ because of his leadership realized the need of religious instruction and so gave it in Germantown, Pennsylvania. While there are today three outstanding groups of Brethren who trace their ancestry as a church to Mack, there are likewise smaller groups that either in part or whole owe their origin to this same man. It is unfortunate that people with a common ancestry and having more in common than that which divides them cannot unite forces against the evil that threatens to

overthrow and engulf the Christian churches of this day. The solid fundamentals that furnish the foundation piers of our country and civilization do not change with the years. God's moral laws have not been repealed or amended. Not only in the broad reaches of America but wherever civilized man is found, there will be found some one who has been influenced either directly or indirectly by the teachings and basic fundamentals of life as known and proclaimed by the people commonly known as "Tunkers or Dunkards." Not so much in political life, which is more or less the froth of civilized government, but in the underlying bulwark of our country do we find the Brethren background and influence.

"What the World Owes to Alexander Mack," no man knows. Only eternity when the saints are all gathered in from the East and the West and the North and the South, when our Lord shall return shall reveal the amount of credit due this young man who was willing in a time of difficulty to point the way back to God. Truly he must have spent much time in the "upper room" awaiting the leading of the Spirit before he took the step that gave the world a new denomination of people. New in that it took God's word to mean what it said. There are times though in this modern day when his spirit should hover near to point over the shoulder of the one who is explaining it away and lead back to the fundamentals. Often the fact is deplored that altogether we do not constitute as large a following as is found elsewhere under other denominational names. To my mind this is not against us, but for us. His flock is not a large flock, but a little flock. To be tremendously large and likewise proportionately effective will never be for the Brethren people. It is not a popular thing today, nor has it been at any time since those days of 1708 to accept the word of God and practice the things which have been so plainly set forth in its pages.

Alexander Mack has not given to the world the things mentioned in this article as indicated by those who have worn the name Brethren, but he has given to America descendants in name and blood who still stand for the fundamentals that he gave, and who may be found today enriching the communities in which they dwell. (Freeman Ankrum, Gratis, Ohio, Seventh Lineal descendant of Alexander Mack).